**ADDING WEIGHT TO YOUR TESTIMONY #8 "Love"**
**2 Peter 1: 4-7**

*Intro: The final characteristic of Christian virtue is love. But this kind of love is a Christian distinctive; It is very different than what is commonly called "love." We need to unsure that we understand it correctly so we can model it.*

## I. Self-Interested Love

A. The nature of love as we usually understand it
1. Our love flows out of our own interest
a. **Emotional:** *I fell in love…You make me feel wonderful/special…*
1. Of course those who we are not "in love with" we treat differently
b. **Mutual interest:** *Shared sense of humor/hobbies/politics*
*1. Kenneth Wuest speaks of phileo/brotherly love: It is a love that is called out of one's heart as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person… both have things in common with one another. The one loving finds a reflection of his own nature in the person or thing loved.*
1. Those who we don't share mutual interest – we treat differently
c. **Often performance-based:** *If you do this for me, or if you do right and measure up;* You get my love
1. Those who don't measure up or fail us – we treat differently
a. In this kind of love, the one doing the loving gets a benefit; *My son the honor student/doctor…*
d. **Self-interested:** We are willing to give out because of what we want to gain in return
*1.* ***Luke 6:34*** *And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*
a. We treat the powerful differently – because we are hoping to gain a future benefit
*1.* ***James 2:1-3*** *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:*
*b. Q: Why would they treat rich people differently than poor people?*
2. This kind love treats people differently who have nothing to offer us
*a. Those who can do nothing for us, or those who can do nothing to us…*

B. Christianity widens the gates of love
1. Last week – brotherly kindness: We have a mutual family relationship in God
*a.* ***Mark 3:33-34*** *But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"* *34* *And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!*
1. People that we may never have related to before
2. But we still tend to be self-interested: Even in the family of God!
a. We seek out those who make us feel good/same interests/measure up/benefit us
*1.* ***Acts 6:1*** *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.*
3. This will be insufficient over time: Interest wanes/people fail/violate/lose power
*a. Note: See people who decry entire church as having "no love" – disgusted/write off people*
*1. Aren't they <u>doing</u> the very thing they claim to hate?*

## II. Agapé Love

A. A revolutionary and foundational basis of Christian virtue is love

1. A completely different word: Agape the word is used 135x in the NT

a. Defined: Love that has <u>the interest of the one you love</u> at heart

b. A sense of value or preciousness not based on what the person does or has: Beloved!

*1.* ***1 Thessalonians 1:4*** *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (He sees value!)*

2. Totally different than human love: Not based on the benefit of the one who loves – but the one loved

*a.* ***Romans 5:8*** *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

3. **Agape love is sacrificial/self-giving:** To benefit the recipient

*a.* ***1 John 4:10*** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

*b.* ***John 3:16*** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

B. The crucial understanding: This kind of love is a decision/an act of the will

1. People don't love if they don't feel it – or love until they don't feel it anymore

*a. Marriage: I'm not in love anymore b. I can't love – they are mean/disappointing…*

*1. Natural love is impulsive: We fell in love/we clicked*

*b.* ***Agape love*** *is the greatest virtue of the Christian life. Yet that type of love was rare in pagan Greek literature. That's because the traits agape portrays—unselfishness, self-giving, willful devotion, concern for the welfare of others—were mostly disdained in ancient Greek culture as signs of weakness.*

2. **Agape love is volitional:** A decision of the will

*a. I will love even if I don't feel it! b. I will love until I feel it*

*1.* ***1 John 4:11*** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

3. **Agape love is unconditional:** Not based on what you do

C. **Agape love must involve action**

*1.* ***Mark 12:31*** *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

a. Follows up with story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate love <u>demonstrated</u>

1. Sees someone in need ( not like him) gives time/effort/money to benefit him

*2.* ***1 John 3:17*** *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

*a. Jesus: The least of these…unloveable/unpowerful/unattractive…*

## <u>III. Truths About Love</u>

A. This is a Godly dimension

1. **It takes a miracle of God:** This is not normal to human beings

a. Salvation makes true love possible: It is God implanting in us His divine Nature

*1.* ***Galatians 5:22*** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

B. This is a command for believers

*1.* ***Ephesians 5:25*** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

a. God would not command something that we can't do

*2.* ***2 Peter 1:7*** *And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (add to your faith)*

*a. There is an effort involved*

C. This brings the blessing of God

1. **A grace that God uses to unlocks hearts**

a. Often results in salvation

*1. **Acts 7:59-60** And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

2. **A testimony that impacts unbelievers**

*a. **John 13:35** By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

*b. Tertullian the early disciple wrote, "It is our care for the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Look!' they say, 'How they love one another!' Look how they are prepared to die for one another."'*

3. **A blessing that God releases into our lives and situations**

*a. **2 John 1:3** <u>Grace</u> be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

1. Grace is often connected with love: Supernatural power